English 237W Introduction to Fiction  
(3 Credit Hours)  
Instructor – Randy Blair  
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Required Text:  
*The Norton Anthology of Contemporary Fiction (2nd Ed.),* Cassill & Oates, Eds.  
ISBN: 0393968332

Recommended:  
Any good dictionary and thesaurus

Course Description:  Reading and study of various authors and forms of fiction (such as short story, novella, novel), with attention to historical development and critical terminology. (Doane College Catalog 2009-2010)

Course Objectives: This survey course will introduce students to the experience of short fiction in several ways: 1) the obvious reading, 2) discussion, via reading reports, of the various background elements of the times that gave rise to the pieces, and 3) discussion, also via reading reports, of the writer’s craft. Upon completion of the course the student will have a clear understanding of:

- Identification of the background elements that gave rise to the story, including
  - Political
  - Social
  - Moral
- Identification of the writer’s craft used in the story, including
  - Theme
  - Plot
  - Voice
  - Style

Your Participation: Your participation, through the reading reports, is a key element to your overall success. In addition to the reading reports, you will write a brief research paper on one of the authors that you have read in the course. This research paper will include a review of the author’s works, his or her development as a writer, the times in which he or she wrote, and any unique stylistic elements to the author’s writing.

Grading: 4 Reading Report Assignments @ 20 points each; research paper at 20 points.  
Grading Scale: 100-90 = A; 80-89 = B; 70-79 = C; 60-69 = D; <60 = F.

Academic Integrity Policy: All individual work will be the student’s own. The use of others’ work is plagiarism, which will result in penalties to be determined by the professor.
Course Mechanics: This course lasts eight weeks. It will be divided into 2-week work sessions. During the two-week sessions you will complete the assigned readings and construct the Reading Reports for each of the readings. The Reading Reports are to be long enough for you to briefly note the required elements of the piece, but they are never to exceed two pages in length, double-spaced, per story that you are reporting on. You will do one report for each of the assigned readings, with four reports making up one assignment. Typically, these reports average 1 - 1 ½ pages in length per story. Each assignment will be sent to you via e-mail by the instructor. For purposes of this course, we will consider Friday to be the class day, with the first Friday of the term being the first class meeting. Upon receipt of your assignment, you will have two weeks to complete the assignment and return it to the instructor via e-mail. After I have received your assignment, I will send you a confirming e-mail that says “I got it” with the next assignment attached. You do not have to take the full two weeks to complete each assignment. When you have completed the assignment, send it to me and I will send you the next one in the series. While you are working on the Reading Reports, you will want to begin working on your brief research paper. After selecting an author, do the necessary research and complete the research paper in your own time. However, the completed paper must be e-mailed to me no later than December 7. The research paper will be no less than 5 and no more than 7 pages in length, double-spaced (not including reference page.) You are to use no fewer than 5 researched sources, cite them correctly, and include a reference list at the end of the paper. The reference citations are to be documented using the APA format.

Reading/Writing Assignments

Assignment No. 1 (Text page numbers follow the author’s name)
Margaret Atwood, The Man from Mars, pp. 16-33; T. Coraghessan Boyle, The Descent of Man, pp. 68-77; Robert Coover, The Baby Sitter, pp. 123-147; Gabriel Garcia-Marquez, A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings, pp. 218-223 (Report due November 2)

Assignment No. 2

Assignment No. 3

Assignment No. 4
Amy Tan, Rules of the Game, pp. 480-489; Hunter S. Thompson, A Death in the Family, pp. 490-492; John Updike, The Other, pp. 493-507; Alice Walker, Everyday Use, pp. 517-524 (Report due December 14)